European Union and humanitarian aid

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The Council adopted conclusions on the progress towards an EU consensus on humanitarian aid which can be summarised as follows:

- the Council highlights the importance of discussing Humanitarian Aid within the competent bodies of the Council and takes positive note of the preparatory work done by the Presidency and the European Commission towards reaching an EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid;
- the increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters as well as the changing nature of conflicts and very significant changes in the international humanitarian environment necessitate a consolidated reaction of the European Union, collectively the largest provider of international humanitarian aid;
- taking into account the central coordinating role of the United Nations and the good progress made in reforms of the international humanitarian system, the initiative for an EU consensus on humanitarian aid is also essential in order to underline the need to ensure respect of International Humanitarian Law and to promote Good Humanitarian Donorship;
- the consultation organised by the European Commission in close cooperation with the Presidency in December 2006 confirms that Member States, the European Commission, the United Nations family, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and non governmental organisations share a large number of major concerns;
- the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are strongly supported by all humanitarian stakeholders.

Recognising the importance of this initiative, the Council encourages all parties to pursue the work with a view to reach an agreement on an EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid as soon as possible.